

# Renewing Criminalized and Hegemonic Cultural Landscapes

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**Abstract** The Mafia's long historical pedigree in *Mezzogiorno*, Southern Italy, has empowered the Mafioso as a notorious, uncontested, and hegemonic figure. The counter-cultural resistance against the mafiosi culture began to be institutionalized in the early 1990s. Today, Libera Terra is the largest civil society organization in the country that uses the lands confiscated from the Mafia as a space of cultural repertoire to realize its ideals. Deploying labor force through volunteer participation, producing biological fruits and vegetables, and providing information to the students on the fields are the principal cultural practices of this struggle. The confiscated lands make the Italian experience of anti-Mafia resistance a unique example by connecting the land with the ideals of cultural change. The sociocultural resistance of Libera Terra conveys a political message through these practices and utters that the Mafia is not invincible. This study draws the complex panorama of the Mafia and anti-Mafia movement that uses the 'confiscated lands' as cultural and public spaces for resistance and socio-cultural change. In doing so, this article sheds new light on the relationship between rural criminology and crime prevention policies in Southern Italy by demonstrating how community development practice of Libera Terra changes the meaning of landscape through iconographic symbolism and ethnographic performance.

## Introduction

Cultural landscapes have found a central space in human and cultural geography, which are defined as the “combined works of nature and of man” (UNESCO 2005: 84). Hence, the landscape itself is seen as more than a physical place, as it is shaped by the very factors

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The author would like to thank Libera. Associazioni, nomi e numeri contro le mafie for the permission to use the photos.

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which express dimensions of power and justice phenomena in society itself (Olwig and Mitchell 2009). However, the process of change in cultural landscape and its relation with power and justice have not been fully elaborated or investigated through the Mafia-land nexus. At this point, it is necessary to express what I mean by the Mafia. The Mafia and organized crime are used interchangeably but the two words have certain nuances. I will use “Mafia” in this paper to underscore its traditional character as an organized crime group. The *Mafioso* means a single man in the organized crime group. Catanzaro (1992) particularly underscored that *Cosa Nostra* (Sicilian Mafia) has had the most powerful relation to the land. It has benefited from the economic and political situation of Sicily through exercising its power on the lands since its emergence in the nineteenth century. It is important to note that there are three other main Mafia groups in Italy, which are Camorra, ‘Ndrangheta, and Sacra Corona Unita. These Mafia groups display differences in structure. However, I attribute a cultural meaning rather than a structural one when I refer to the (M)afia because the mafiosi culture and its mentality hardly differ among all mafia groups.

The present article is an attempt to understand the social transformation of cultural landscapes in Southern Italy where the lands have been governed by various mafia clans for decades. After some toil, *Libera Terra*, which is one of the branches of the *Libera* (the largest not-for-profit and anti-Mafia civil society organization in Italy), declared a civic struggle against the Mafia in the mid-1990s. The Mafia’s intrusion into the lives of the Italian people has not only economic and political costs. More alarmingly, it has detrimental cultural costs that play a propulsive role in the increase of economic and political costs. This is palpably evident in the relationship between the land and Mafia. This indelible link urges us to concentrate on the integration of “law and policy” into the landscape studies as the Mafia is part of a social and legal problem. What is more, cultural formations should be added to “law and policy” enquiries to re-define the perception of landscape. In doing so, we are able to address the social fabrics of complex criminal structures like the Mafia. In this article, law, policy and cultural change will be analyzed by exploring the works of *Libera Terra* and its ideals to renew hegemonic mafiosi culture in the region.

I argue that *Libera Terra* is a courageous example of resistance against the Mafia on its own territories. Furthermore, ethnographic work of *Libera Terra* reveals and transforms symbols, meanings, memories, identities, and cultures through the practices of each activist who works on the confiscated lands. Yet, the main obstacle of such a promising community practice is transferring the same hope and belief to the local community to erase the Mafia and mafiosi culture. This article is the first attempt to discuss the role of the confiscated lands for cultural renewal and the struggle of the anti-Mafia movement through employing a community development perspective. This is the reason why the present essay aims to unveil the community development practice and its influence on local communities by analyzing the relationship between the Mafia and anti-Mafia movement while taking in account the importance of the lands for each agency. Thereby, I will utilize a deconstructive approach to tease out the social fabrics of the Mafia and anti-Mafia movement and their relation with the cultural landscapes. For this aim, the present research will employ two disciplines: Iconography and ethnography. I will use iconography to determine what the lands represent for the local community and the Mafia. I will explore endeavors of this community practice and its impact on the ideals of *Libera Terra* through an ethnographic model, which is applied by the organization. First, I will provide background information about the Mafia, the socio-political context of Italy on the path of anti-Mafia development and the foundation story of *Libera Terra*. Next, I will present the role of iconographic representation of the lands and ethnographic struggle of the volunteers and co-operators of *Libera Terra*. Finally, I will critically explore the struggle of *Libera Terra* through

community development perspective. This article aims to decipher the codes of a socially evolved civic resistance against the Mafia, its potential opportunities for the local community and the limits of such an idealized community practice, which aims to change a criminalized and hegemonic cultural landscapes.

### **The Mafia and Anti-Mafia Movement: The Role of Social and Political Context in the Foundation of Libera Terra**

It is worth elaborating the historical panorama of the Mafia-land nexus to identify the reasons that led to the consolidation of the Mafia's power, which fostered the emergence of anti-Mafia movement at the same time. The Mafia in Sicily emanated largely from the politically and socially tense era in the late 19th century. The emergence of the Mafia was mainly related to a malfunctioning social system, legacy of corruption, lack of meritocracy, and post-feudal economic structure. The lands are perhaps the most significant representations that show the traditional power of the Mafioso, who became a cult of personality while governing large estates in Southern Italy and particularly in western Sicily. The Mafioso benefited from socio-economic conditions and gained an institutional character throughout its historical evolution and emergence.

Feudalism was no longer a prevailing social system, as the large estates of the barons and baronesses were sold or the lands of the nobles were rented by fellow citizens after 1812 (Bandiera 2002). An overwhelming majority of the barons and baronesses were living far from their own lands at that time. Therefore, they assigned a person, who was called *gabellotto*, to manage the lands in the name of the owners. In this sense, *gabellotto*-plural form is *gabellotti*-signifies a single man and rural entrepreneur who rented the farmlands or functioned as an intermediary between peasants and the barons/baroness starting from the mid-nineteenth century. The Mafioso served as a guardian and, at times, played an administrative role between peasants/local people and the owners of the land or *gabellotti* (Dickie 2004: 132). The criminal and hegemonic collaboration developed in the post-feudal era of Sicily to provide security and guarantee the rent of those lands (Gambetta 1993: 87). Indeed, the mafiosi were the inhabitants of the communes and villages where they enjoyed an upper social class status with land ownership or protection. Nevertheless, different from other fellow-inhabitants, they had more charisma, tendency for violence, necessary social networks and leadership skills. The mafiosi, maintained such a social role coercively, often by applying violence, uttering threats or fostering unsafe conditions for the assets, which entailed a requisite to collaborate with a Mafioso to obtain his protection. This is another reason that *gabellotti* mostly evolved as mafiosi. Thus, the emergence and prevailing authority of the Mafia partially stemmed from the lands that he protected (Catanzaro 1992).

As a result, the lands assisted the continuity of the social status quo of the Mafioso, reinforcing his power to control and sustain the territory financially. In doing so, he gained a prestigious social status, if not a virtuous one. This is to say that the land and its interfaces with the material and social needs of the hegemonic powers in the community played significant roles for the constitution of the Mafia's power in an agricultural economy particularly in the late 19th and the first half of the 20th century in the Kingdom of Italy. However, the power of the mafiosi did not make itself uncontested only in rural areas because diverse mafia clans made their names notorious and eventually established their own authorities in the urban areas as well. This predilection was the most opportunist method to increase its profits (Lupo 1993; Schneider and Schneider 1997; Santino 2006).

The rural and urban control of the Mafia was not limited to Sicily. Three other prominent and historical organized crime groups: Camorra from the Campania region, 'Ndrangheta from the Calabria region and finally the youngest organized crime groups from the Apulia region, Sacra Corona Unita, which was established in the 1970s, were recklessly influential both in the rural and urban areas. Yet, the mafia groups' control in rural areas is the focal point of its expansion in the entire territory. This is not only a historical reverberation of its power but also a method to symbolically prove its strength in the small communes of the country. Hence, and more importantly, the lands under the Mafia's governance represented and ratified the Mafia's power inextricably, especially during elections times. The political-criminal nexus in small communes under the control of the mafias opened the gates of cooperation to exchange votes and material benefits between the mafiosi and politicians. Thereof, not only the local residents but the mafiosi received public funds of the central government in the communes where infiltration into the public institutions was perceived as a norm particularly after the Italian economic boom in the 1960s and 1970s. Even though, the Italian state fought various organized crime groups from time to time, the first official and parliamentary initiative came to the fore with the foundation of the antimafia commission, which became completely functional in 1963. The commission was not a permanent solution for the mafia problem but at least certain state organizations combated the Mafia through legal channels when the other state organizations enjoyed a mutual relationship with various mafia groups.

This duality crystallized the fragmentation of the antimafia fight with the start of the biggest antimafia trial, *maxiprocesso*, which began in 1986 in Palermo. Thanks to this trial, hundreds of mafiosi were put behind the bars in 1987. However, the revenge was on the table of the mafia groups. In the early 1990s, the Italian public was thrown into absolute political chaos with the assassination of two anti-Mafia magistrates, Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, in the summer of 1992. Shortly thereafter, a set of corruption scandals were uncovered, namely *Tangentopoli*, which cited almost half of the Italian parliament members' names in the corruption reports. More than 400 city and town councils were dissolved following these scandals. However, the public dissent was unbearable and dejected Italian citizens were hopeless in the brooding social atmosphere that afflicted the country. In the last two decades the police and court sent scores of mafiosi to jail, which could be argued that state policies are relatively successful when it is compared with the numbers in previous decades (Paoli 2008). Nevertheless, in the meantime, numerous city councils were dissolved from south to the north in the country. What is currently more perilous is that the mafia groups, particularly 'Ndrangheta, have moved to northern Italy so as to excel its power and increase its profit in the industrialized region of the country (Chiesa et al. 2012). The Mafia is not a problem of only Southern Italy anymore. Conversely, the Mafia is a national problem and its prevalence is related to the hegemonic culture at the global level and historical social inequality at the national level because the current capitalist social order in the world, corrupt bureaucracy in the country, and a dysfunctional Italian polity, provided a propulsive force to the Mafia and mafiosi culture.

Personal initiatives against the Mafia were taken in the 1970s, particularly with the initiatives of Giuseppe Impastato, known as Peppino, who was born into a Mafia family. He confronted against the Mafia by establishing a radio programme in Cinisi, a town in central Sicily, and he remained politically active in his anti-Mafia campaign until he was killed by the Mafia in 1978 during the council election campaign in Cinisi (Schneider and Schneider 2003: 170). His struggle and tragic death drew attention in both the media and the public nationally, but the reaction against the Mafia was limited and eventually an ineffective anti-Mafia mobilization was eliminated in time. Corruption scandals, violent

political polarization between radical right and left groups and the intervention of secret organizations and foreign states to dominate the political spectrum of Italy in the 1970s and 1980s showed that the hopes of Italians concerning the functionality of the political system withered definitively.

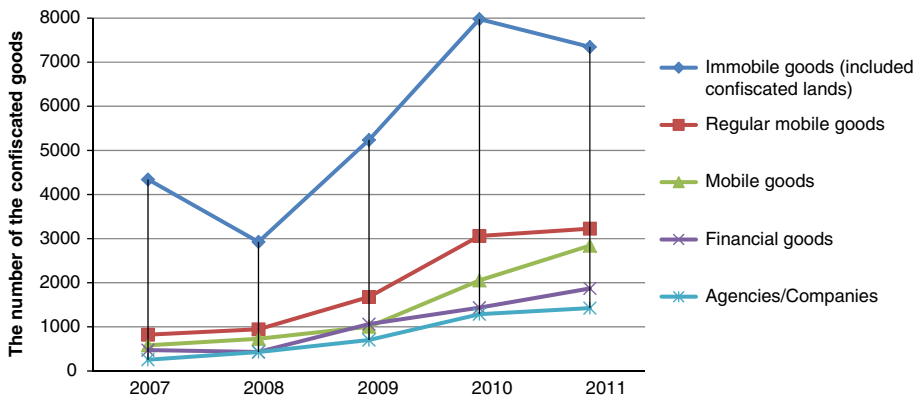
As described above, assassinations of the anti-Mafia magistrates, journalists and priests who stood against the Mafia in the early 1990s created perilous public panic. There should have been effective solutions to devise not only to fight the Mafia but also to change the culture of lawlessness, which offered an optimum space for the advancement of the mafiosi culture. Following this common sense, numerous grassroots movements were established, one by one, in Southern Italy in the early 1990s. Even though majority of these organizations functioned only in their own communes and towns where it was established, a few of them had national programmes and successfully set up branch offices in the major cities of Italy.

Libera is one of those antimafia establishments, which was founded in 1995 with the initiatives of Luigi Ciotti, a priest of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Turin. Libera organized itself swiftly after the second half of the 1990s and became the largest not-for-profit organization fighting against the Mafia in the entire country. Shortly after its foundation, Libera structured its programmes through four diverse policy areas. The land section (including confiscated properties) is represented by Libera Terra; education is represented by Libera Formation; memory is represented by Libera Memory; and finally sport is represented by Libera Sport. Thanks to its strenuous efforts, Libera sustains its works with the help of over 1,200 associations, groups, and schools across the country.

Turning to our case study, Libera Terra was constituted in 1995 to work particularly on the lands and assets confiscated from the Mafia. Libera Terra organizes international community service work camps and cooperates with other prominent organizations to extend its networks and consolidate its *raison d'être*. Some of these cooperative institutions are Alce Nero Melizia; Slow Food; Banca Etica; Coop Fond and Firma TO. In my interview with Davide Pati on January 7, 2011, who was the responsible person for the confiscated lands in Libera, he concluded that: "Libera Terra is a story of making the cultures, struggling for an ethical discipline, and transforming local territories by utilizing the local labor and presenting traditional local foods with our cooperative institutions in the market." The main aim of Libera Terra is essentialising the lands and defying the mafiosi culture. Hence, they use the same lands not only as a public space to fight against the Mafia but also as a mobilization sphere to practise their own ideals. Cultivating the lands, producing organic fruits and vegetables, oil and wine and selling these products are the prominent and concrete examples of these practices.

Libera Terra aims to achieve one ultimate goal, which is to bring a definitive failure to the mafiosi culture. For this aim, Libera Terra deploys both innovative and idiosyncratic practices in its own community development model in which progressive social change in public spaces convey the message that the Mafia and its hegemony are not invincible.

One of the first and foremost achievements of Libera was its role in promoting anti-Mafia law through the grassroots mobilization of people. For instance, the approved Law No. 109, 7 March 1996, put into effect the reuse of the goods of any criminal or illegal organization for social purposes such as using the confiscated asset as a library, hospital, school or public house. Libera played a major role in popularizing and legalizing this law by gathering hundreds of thousands of signatures on a petition. The law has ratified certain gaps in anti-Mafia policies. In addition, this legal change against the Mafia has produced substantial outcomes by hampering the Mafia groups' economic strength and their symbolic influence on the local territories. Immobile confiscated goods, which include the



**Fig. 1** The number of confiscated goods from 2007 to 2012. *Source:* Consistenza, destinazione ed utilizzo dei beni sequestrati o confiscati—Stato dei procedimenti di sequestro o confisca—Relazione al Parlamento ex L. 7 marzo 1996, n. 109 (marzo 2011) Dipartimento per gli Affari di Giustizia, Direzione generale della Giustizia penale Ufficio I—Reparto Dati Statistici e Monitoraggio

lands, are the largest share of the confiscated assets. (see Fig. 1). The superior number of confiscated immobile goods demystifies the vital importance of the lands for the Mafia's territorial power and the anti-Mafia movement.

The Mafia is not only a social problem; it is also a legal problem as the Mafia destroys the very meaning of justice and violates the rule of law. This is the reason that bottom-up policies in the exclusion of legal measures against the Mafia may hinder the effectiveness of an anti-Mafia movement. The particular essence of the relationship between the State and non-State forces shows that when legal measures are coupled with the civic struggle, the fight against the oppressive social systems, such as the Mafia, hastens. Today, Italy has the widest anti-Mafia measures in the world with the help of extensive pressure created by civil society. The social power of civic resistance also enforced politicians to act accordingly. As a result, continuity in the anti-Mafia movement throughout its historical evolution gains more importance. In this regard, Rakapoulos' recent work (2014) offers an important paradigm as he shows the historical evolution and persistent struggle of agricultural cooperatives in Sicily that avoided the harms of the Mafia after the World War II, contributes to the fight against the Mafia today. In line with Rakapoulos' argument, perhaps, it can well serve to argue that challenging the Mafia through confiscated lands is both an iconographic demonstration of resistance and materialization of this struggle through ethnographic performances.

### Iconographic Symbol of the Lands and Ethnographic Performances of Anti-Mafia Fighters

Iconography and ethnography are the two chief disciplines to unveil the power relations and its reflexivity especially in closed social structures and the actors of polity. There is no doubt that the Mafia and mafiosi culture are the cases in which we can extensively find the very forms of social exploitation, violence and submissiveness. This is the principal reason that I aim to explore the challenges of the community in the face of the Mafia's grim realities and the struggle of the anti-Mafia movement through using iconography and

ethnography. Iconographic analyses of the land from the perspectives of each agency and ethnographic performances of anti-Mafia movement activists draw the boundaries of increasing tension between these two cultural poles; the mafiosi culture and anti-Mafia movement. The two-sided subjectivism regarding the Mafia and anti-Mafia movement triggers three prominent questions. First, how the subjective perceptions of the anti-Mafia movement resonate and accumulate its aims on the ‘Land’ through ethnographic performances? Second, how various ethnographic performances pave the way for the transformation of those lands to the affective icons in the anti-Mafia movement? Finally, what is the significance of this transformation for community development?

Daniels and Cosgrove (1988), in their remarkable edited book on ‘Iconography of Landscape’, raised the importance of landscape in the studies of iconography. They particularly demonstrated how iconography influenced the interpretation of Panofsky’s art works, which later conflated with landscape to elaborate, contextualize, and create new meanings and representations. In particular, iconography began to be popularized as a scientific discipline in the 1980s (Panofsky 1955; Daniels and Cosgrove 1988). Iconography has been applied—from visual to cultural studies and photography to maps—to reveal the encoded symbols and meanings and to comprehend the embodied relations of power. Hence, iconography has become a main discipline to examine the beliefs, values, apprehension, contention, and the ‘Worlds’ of the studied subjects (Hoelscher 2009: 132–139). From this broad perspective, it was argued that a common landscape ideal is a challenging attempt due to Italy’s deeply problematic social history and political past (Agnew 2002). However, Libera Terra’s relation with the confiscated lands brings us to the heart of an idealization process of these criminalized landscapes as the iconic symbols of the anti-Mafia movement (see Fig. 2).

The importance of landscapes was raised as a critical argument to amplify its influence on political power and its role in ‘becoming the groundwork—and the dreamwork—of justice’ (Mitchell 2003a, b: 793). The common ideal landscape of Libera Terra stems from its aims to attain justice, which had been abandoned for decades in the region. Don Luigi, the founder and president of Libera, puts this ideal landscape perception bluntly by stating that:

“The products marked with “Libera Terra”, with their *gusto of legality* and responsibility, arrive to the houses and tables of the numerous Italians, and perhaps



**Fig. 2** A confiscated vineyard in Sicily, which reflects the idealisation and beauty of a landscape through the works of Libera Terra. The organisation uses various landscapes photographs with the products on these lands to mobilise more people and to take more public attention



today, the symbol of this re-conquest, this turn, this collective confrontation ‘from bottom’ against the Mafia and *silence* are fostered by tenacious works in every part of Italy” (La legge 2011)

Similar to the integration of culture into landscape studies, ethnography had been widely neglected in examinations of human progress in geography until the last decades. In fact, ethnography offers indispensable insights into the “processes and meanings that undergird sociospatial life” (Herbert 2000: 550). The creation of a new memory of cultural geography in the face of impeding threats from the Mafia requires a drastic social change. This change is accomplished with a high level of symbolic interactionism that is employed in ethnographic performance by the activists associated with Libera Terra. Both of the two participant types, the young people who work voluntarily and the cooperatives and local farmers who collaborate with Libera Terra, define the very meaning of the lands by creating a bottom-up mobilization. The principal ideal of the participants is transforming ‘criminalized and hegemonic cultural landscapes’ into the ‘liberated and renewed cultural landscapes’ of the inhabitants. This is not simply a desired social change that occurs with the assistance of the legal system. Essentially, the practices and social work on the confiscated lands are tributes for those who lost their lives to change the mafiosi culture. Nevertheless, their struggle was hindered so they could not consolidate a culture of lawfulness in the country, but they lit the fire of inspiration to create an anti-Mafia identity and to act together for this end. Working on the land provides the volunteers of Libera Terra with the opportunity to re-discover their own public space first-hand and terminate the rampant injustice on criminalized and hegemonic landscapes (see Fig. 3). This example reflects the very forms of resistance in which social change is reverberated through iconographic interpretations of new identities and concerted actions of ethnographic performances.

The idealization of their struggle, reference to the regional patterns, policies to cooperate with local people and civil society are echoed profoundly through the works of Libera Terra and its cooperative institutions. Therefore, not only the confiscated lands on which they work to realize their ideals but also the crops, fruits and vegetables that they gather from these fields turn to the idealized icons when these products find a place in the supermarkets or dining tables of the Italian citizens. More strikingly, these products are stamped and marked with the logos of Libera Terra, which utter anti-Mafia slogans at the



**Fig. 3** The activists of Libera working on the confiscated lands in the summer with t-shirts that state “Estate Liberi” (translated “Free Summer”)





**Fig. 4** The marmalade that was produced from the confiscated lands displays an anti-Mafia slogan and wordplay on these iconic figures, as shown in the photo—*il g(i)usto di Sicilia*—the taste (justice) of Sicily. This product can be purchased in the markets and events of Libera Terra

same time. For instance, one may encounter one of these products in a supermarket and may read the slogan *Il g(i)usto del legume* (*il gusto* means the taste or flavor and *il giusto* is justice) on the cover of a bottled vegetable. One may observe similar slogans and etiquettes on nearly every product of Libera Terra and its cooperative institutions (see Fig. 4).

The play on words signify that ethnographic endeavors are not limited to the works on the lands; rather, their impact continues with the slogans written on the products that were cultivated from the confiscated lands, processed and made available at the markets across the country, from the South to the North. Thereof, ethnographic performance on the confiscated lands resonate in the renewed and liberated cultural landscapes through each of these collective practices, value creating products, and enduring ideals of the activists. Those products of Libera Terra in the market are the icons of their ethnographic performances through which we understand that cultural landscapes are in the process of renewal.

Although the anti-Mafia movement appears to be unified as one community, there are two major groups in this study that differ in terms of their structure and perception of the Mafia phenomenon. The first community includes the activists of Libera Terra who work on the lands voluntarily and believe that the Mafia will be defeated 1 day. They work on the confiscated land voluntarily with the sense of social consciousness to destroy the invincible image of the Mafioso. The second community consists of the local people whose parents have lived close to the confiscated lands for many years. The local people witnessed the oppressive methods of the Mafia groups first-hand, heard stories regarding the Mafia or listened to the ballads that were written to praise, paradoxically, Mafia figures. The Mafia has reaped the benefits of the lands in Southern Italy both materially and socially. Moreover, on one side, the legacy of the Mafia's injustice, spanning more than a century, renders it as an incontestable and symbolic power. On the other side, a significant number of the young people who work on the confiscated lands come from Northern and Central Italy, where the historical existence of the Mafia has not been as entrenched as in Southern Italy. The local community does not underestimate the importance of the efforts of Libera Terra and its cooperative institutions of which some of them are part; however, the hope of Libera Terra's community may be withered due to the perception of the Mafia, which still protects its vicious characters and images in the minds of local residents.

My first trip to Palermo vindicates this argument. I entered a bar to ask which street leads to the confiscated lands. The owner of the bar has been living in the area for a long time which was approximately four miles away from the confiscated lands. I briefly

explained my research concerning the confiscated lands. He was quite suspicious about my “real identity”. However, in the middle of our talk, he stated:

“Many young people come to here from different regions of Italy. They are nice boys and girls. But, nothing is changing beneath the surface. The state confiscates the lands of the Mafioso but the mafias find other methods to make money...You know they earn so much money by drug trafficking...This is Sicilia...boy...nothing will change...(sighing)”

This statement clearly demonstrates a cultural gap between the activists of Libera Terra and local people for the aim of defying the Mafia permanently. Different from the young activists, local people have experienced the despotic realities of the Mafia for many years; therefore, erasing hopelessness from the daily life of citizens and expecting from them the same behaviors of the activists of Libera Terra seem to be challenging, if not impossible. Moreover, I observed the similar desperate attitude towards the Mafia in my trip to Brindisi. I lost my way and asked for directions from a farmer who was in his forties and owned a small cottage near the confiscated land. He walked with me for a few minutes to show the shortest way to travel to the confiscated land. His remarks during our brief dialogue tersely summarized that destroying the Mafia was only a desire and that such a desire requires a set of drastic and systematic policies and efforts to cut the Mafia off at its roots.

I said: “confiscating the land of the Mafioso is an effective way to fight the Mafia, I think...”

He interrupted immediately and claimed: “confiscating the land is like throwing away the infected eggs of a chicken but it is not enough as the chicken still survives.”

This short dialogue sparks fear of escalating hopelessness among the ordinary local people who are not affiliated with any civil society organization that works against the Mafia. On this ground, the critical point of the farmer needs to be questioned. The idealized efforts of Libera Terra and the concerted actions of its activists explicitly show that they destroy the image of the Mafia. Yet, in addition to the challenge of gaining the hearts of the local community, they have concerns for the capacity of these works to defy the Mafia permanently. Nevertheless, there are numerous organizations in southern Italy today that collaborate with the farmers to protect them from the threats and pressure of the mafia groups and cooperating in the production process of the corps. The current social context is diversely different from a few decades ago when the mafia groups were almost the sole authority in the region. The practices of Libera Terra pursue value-creation, new symbols and images as part of the iconographic symbolism. They work on those lands to renew the memory of local people about the Mafia as part of their ethnographic performances. Even if there are some concerns about defeating the Mafia permanently within the region, there is hope that consolidation of a culture of lawfulness is only a matter of time.

### **Community Development Model of Libera Terra: Defying the Hegemony of the Mafia in its Own Territory**

Community development is the interaction among the people to devise new solutions to their problems when the State is unable to do so (Bartley 2003: 186). The development of a community psychology, in addition to critical consciousness of the oppressed, is the necessary tool for social and political progress (Watts et al. 1999). However, such a socio-

political development includes cumbersome social structures when the Mafia and the state are the interchangeable figures of authority in the political history of community life. In this respect, community development of civil society is not only motivated by the reluctance of the state but also impotence of the state's legal system encourages activists to change the system. Mitchell (2003a, b) showed that the fight for the public spaces in the U.S.A shapes the legal system and, in return, that socially marginalized people are exposed to the impact of the same legal framework while fighting for their rights by using those public spaces. Similarly, in the present case is another struggle to regain the public spaces and attain social justice. Nevertheless, the anti-Mafia movement preserves its distinctiveness from community development examples because, on one hand, the activists fought to regain their own public spaces with the help of the law, which they made it legal by confiscating the assets of the mafiosi. On the other hand, the people who work and produce on the confiscated lands create a sea change story in cultural geographies. Through these practices, the idealization of a landscape is ratified in the minds of the local people with the lingering values of Libera Terra.

Civic agriculture emerged as an important concept about a decade ago in the USA. Lyson (2004) underscored the importance of civic agriculture when local conditions and micro social dynamics influence both economic and agricultural growth. Similar to civic agriculture, green criminology has raised serious issues in eco-crime and environmental justice by focusing on the crimes that harm the environment and farmers. In this regard, one of the most prominent concepts that green criminologists developed is land theft. Local farmers are exposed to certain risks when their lands are taken away by the state, corporations or simply by powerful actors who acquire lands for food, biofuels, mining and logging purposes (White 2012). In addition to the transformative force of civic agriculture, it is a local and rural resistance method in the face of risks posed by land theft and similar threats. Hence, both civic agriculture and land theft should be considered in the scope of green-cultural criminology. Brisman and South (2013) have recently introduced the importance of green-cultural criminology. They convincingly showed that both green criminology and cultural criminology have commonalities when the contestation of a space, transgression, resistance and its cultural significance are taken in account to construe harms and crimes against the environment. From this perspective, Libera Terra resists with civic agricultural methods against the threats of mafia groups' hegemony in rural areas. Therefore, its transformative social force is a model of civic resistance in other criminalized rural places. What is more, Libera Terra is a bottom-top policy model for a positive social change so it shows that green-cultural criminology may produce also effective solutions to hard social problems.

As it was delineated above, Libera Terra was the outcome of accumulated injustice in the local geographies, national dissents and socio-structural problems of the dysfunctional governance. Van Dyke (2013) criticizes nonrepresentational theory as its interpretation and application neglect the transformation of landscape through the *movement* of history. He argues that "...relations rarely emerge in a totally spontaneous manner. They have a history. And this history of changing relations gets recorded in the landscape" (Van Dyke 2013: 411). This is the reason that the peculiar relationship between the land and Mafia's territorial hegemony for decades symbolized the lands as the reflections of oppression in the eyes of local people. This is why the community development model of Libera Terra has challenged the Mafia's hegemony by reflecting the landscape as a consequence of their performances, which they accomplish on the confiscated lands. In doing so, they eventually shape the very meaning of landscape. The Mafia is not simply a cultural force; it is both a social and an economic outcome of major structural dysfunctionality of the polity.

However, what is clear in the particular works of *Libera Terra* is the polarization of two cultural poles—mafia and anti-Mafia movement. Yet, the vision of *Libera Terra* is using the landscape as an iconic object of their socio-cultural struggle to materialize the landscape through cultivating the products of the confiscated lands. Furthermore, the photographs of the landscape are extensively used in the flyers of *Libera Terra* to mobilize more people and volunteers against the Mafia. The performance of the volunteers of *Libera Terra* is the manifestation of what Rose (2006) developed by borrowing ‘dreams of presence’ concept from Derrida because as he argued “the landscape is not an object whose presence needs to be explained but a presence whose object-like appearance needs to be thought.” (Rose 2006: 538) The performance of *Libera Terra* on the confiscated lands is an ongoing process of transformation, which is likely to continue until the socio-economic base of mafia groups from their traditional territories is eliminated. The concerted actions of *Libera Terra* reflect its “catalyst” and “unified” role to create a collective anti-Mafia identity.

Tota (2005: 75) claimed that “some crimes take place twice: first when they occur, and second when their victims are forgotten”. At this juncture, the example of *Libera Terra* turns to a model of social change by using public spaces to relegate to the past and commemorate victims of the Mafia. Zelizer (1995: 214) pointed out that moving from individualized action to a collective action is highly related to the act of remembering. In this respect, the confiscated lands gain a great significance, as we are able to memorize the tragedy of the Mafia in the past and to show the weaknesses of Mafia through those lands. Hence, we are able to create a collective memory against the Mafia. This is strategically important for the goals of community development because the accumulation of collective memory is a vital instrument to defy the memory of the antagonist. Further, mobilizing people is an indispensable element to achieve the goals of community development. Yet, “networking for community development is not primarily about helping people to form connections that will be beneficial to them personally. Rather, it is about strategies for overcoming psychological and other barriers to facilitate their participation in broader activities and decision making” (Gilchrist 2009: 172).

The importance of participation is the principal fabric of community development; thus, community development is defined as a form of community participation (Abbott 1995). The whole process of Italian anti-Mafia community development embarks on a quest to eliminate the mafiosi culture and create “liberated and renewed cultural landscapes”. The local people were alienated from these lands, which were seized by the local mafiosi. Today, however, these lands are the public spaces where a continuous struggle is employed by the activists who aim to share their ideals with the public and lend their voice to social justice and democracy. Yet, although participation is a requisite for empowerment of community development, it is a challenging process (Botes and van Rensburg 2000). The idealized landscapes become the icons of new cultural formations through each of these struggles when the activists work on the lands to prevent the advancement of the mafiosi culture and empower the culture of lawfulness in society. Campbell (2012) showed how cultural criminology and landscape intersect and demonstrate its power in social structures through performance. Particularly, Campbell (2012: 400) argued that landscape and performance have more discernible patterns when its connotations with “representations, discourses, sensibilities, and material practices” are considered. *Libera Terra* claims that renewing cultural landscape, even if it was dominated recklessly by the Mafia, is not an unattainable dream. Their community development practice can be clearly explored through iconography and ethnography in which power relations of social structure, symbols and performance come to the fore in the clash of two cultural poles: the mafiosi culture and the culture of lawfulness.

Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy (2008, 2014) aptly argued that the understanding the relationship between crime and rural communities requires a comprehensive analysis of the social, political, and economic structure of the investigated places. This is the reason that, different from positivist criminology, rural criminology cannot be reductionist. The Mafia-land nexus and Libera Terra examples show us that the roots of crime, its historical evolution, and state incapacity are the principal factors that determine the route of response to the Mafia with the help of civil society and rural community. Therefore, this is not only an on-going story of social change but also a peculiar example of how cultural landscapes can be transformed with community development practices. Both iconographic symbolization of the lands and ethnographic performances to renew it demonstrate that criminalized and hegemonic cultural landscapes of Southern Italy will remain under the influence of this community development model until defeating the mafiosi culture permanently.

## Conclusion

I endeavored to offer a panorama regarding the reaction of the local community that has been silenced by the Mafia but encouraged by the anti-Mafia movement activists to participate in the movement's activities. The community development model of Libera Terra is distinctive in terms of using iconographic symbols and determining the boundaries of cultural poles by creating a strong sense of confrontation against the Mafia. In addition to the power of those iconic symbols, ethnographic performances elaborate how the Mafia's exploitation and violence create watershed moments with the resisting practices of the Libera Terra-affiliated activists. If we consider the hegemonic and mostly invincible historical periods of the Mafia, Libera Terra is a young establishment with numerous branches across the country, from small traditional towns, which have been exploited under the yoke of the Mafia, to the large cities. Nonetheless, its ambitious and unabated resistance influences the cultural significance of those lands reflexively. This social and cultural transformation experience urges us to perceive these lands through ethnographic lenses as highly symbolized and iconic objects. More fundamentally, the goal of Libera Terra includes the particular essence of 'Civic Renaissance', which is reconstructing the Mafia image different from its positive connotation.

Cultural landscapes have a particular historical background that is necessary for its preservation (Evans et al. 2001). Ethnographic landscapes are primarily associated with the cultural groups and people. This distinction between cultural and ethnographic landscapes loses its significance in the case of Libera Terra, in which the confiscated lands historically symbolize public spaces. As a result, cultural and ethnographic landscapes are converged and interwoven to become the icons of this struggle. Most centrally, there is a nascent engagement with ethnographic performances through the practices of the activists. Therefore, confiscated lands from the Mafia are the iconic and palpable representations of the ethnographic struggle in which the meanings, values, identities and symbols are deployed against the Mafia and mafiosi culture. The law regarding the confiscation of the lands should be the role model for other countries that are afflicted by the Mafia and its culture. The role of civil society is the most significant instrument in creating the idea of resilient communities as evidenced in the present case. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Libera Terra is a flawless organization or that its ideals are easily attainable. Realizing a social change to erase the Mafia requires social participation of the local community that has not been attained by the majority of local residents.

Rural criminology, green criminology and cultural criminology have a set of parallel issues because each discipline shares similar social dynamics in a local and rural setting. The Mafia is one of the few social problems that finds an important space within these three disciplines. However, researchers who study organized crime mostly demonstrate reductionist attempts as the scope of analysis is limited with situational crime prevention methods, policing, and top to bottom state and public policies. This is the reason that future research in this field should not ignore the importance of local setting, rural areas, and the environment through which the mafia members emerge as powerful local figures with strong social networks to function spatially in rural areas. Similarly, rural and green criminologists should consider the complex networks and power of the organized crime groups in small villages and towns where the historical importance of the Mafia has evolved over time and the prestige of a Mafioso conflates with diverse and conflicting notions such as power, authority, prestige, violence, and crime.

Defeating the Mafia is not simply a victory of a well-planned policy against organized crime. What is more, it signifies a defeat of nepotism, corruption, and oppression through which the mafiosi culture finds the fertile atmosphere to renew itself. Consequently, there are three indispensable notions, which are 'hope', 'action' and 'time' to lead to a fundamental social change. These are the prominent instruments to direct the route of daily life of rural communities, in Italy and around the world. If these three notions—'hope', 'action' and 'time'—influence on local priorities and determine national policies persistently, it may be possible to usher in a new stage. Thenceforth, we may acknowledge the ultimate erosion of the Mafia and the mafiosi culture through those iconographic symbols and ethnographic performances.

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